WOMONSPACE NEWS

our voice in the lesbian community

SINGLE LESBIANS

April 1995

Letter to the Editor

In regards to your March 1995 issue, in which the topic of 'Lesbian Partner Abuse' was discussed, I am writing a brief response. I was sincerely touched by the honesty and courage it took for the authors to write their personal life experiences.

So often the voices of survivors are not heard because of fear of being confronted or harassed by the perpetrator. I believe it is important for survivors of abuse to know they are not alone in their experiences and that is why I was so impressed by the integrity of the articles and the strength it took for these woman to write their stories. Thank you.

Kerry Kleinbergen

Voices of Battered Lesbians

A resource for battered lesbians which wasn't mentioned in last month's issue is an audio tape titled *Voices of Battered Lesbians.* It was put together by the lesbian caucus of a coalition of battered women service groups in Boston. The half-hour recording of women who've been battered is available at the Gay and Lesbian Community Centre of Edmonton library, and can be borrowed by centre members. Phone 488-3234.

To Our Casual Readers:

Each copy of *Womonspace News* costs about 90¢ to produce each month, not including many hours of volunteer work. A limited number are distributed free of charge, with the intention of reaching as many *new* lesbians as possible. If you regularily pick up a free copy, please show your appreciation and support by becoming a Womonspace member or else by mailing a donation to the society.

Thank you.

Contributors this issue:

Kerry Kleinbergen, Linda Kropf, Noreen Marshall, Karen, L, Ilke, Amy Lee Cardufian, Shelley, Rosa, Lindy Pratch, Sheryl McInnes

Submissions Are Welcome

Letters to the Editor and other submissions are always welcome.

Topics in upcoming issues:

May—Lesbians and the Law
June—Womonspace Dances
July—Sports Dykes

Womonspace News is a publication of Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton. We are a nonprofit organization. The newsletter is produced by, for, and about lesbians in Edmonton and the surrounding areas. Our purpose is to inform and entertain our members and any other interested lesbians. The opinions expressed in any issue of *Womonspace News* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Directors or the Newsletter Committee. The events, organizations and establishments publicized are not necessarily supported by Womonspace. *Womonspace News* is produced on a volunteer basis by the Newsletter Committee. We welcome submissions. Material submitted becomes the property of Womonspace. We reserve the right to edit for length and content, and to refuse publication. Articles or letters to the editor may be sent to: Womonspace, Basement, 9930-106 Street, Edmonton, AB T5K 1C7. *Womonspace News* seeks advertising that is lesbian-positive to help defer publications costs. Womonspace does not necessarily endorse products or services offered. We reserve the right to refuse ads. For rate information, and to place an ad, please leave a message on the Lesbian Life Line: 425-0511.

SOLO

Linda Kropf

To be or not to be. To have or not to have. To find or not to find. To love or not to love. I sure hope that doesn't describe what goes through a single woman's mind at any time. To live, to experience, to learn and to love—that's more like it; that's what I want. That's what I have.

SOLO ... Being the organizer of the newly-founded Singles Only Lesbian Organization, I have found that there is an overwhelming amount of beauty in our community. You single women out there who are having any type of feelings that being single is abnormal or unhealthy, stop it right now. If you don't like that feeling, call me and I'll talk to you for as long as it takes to explain what kind of feeling and what kind of joy I have felt since being involved with the women in SOLO.

SOLO is a lesbian social club—IT IS NOT A DATING SERVICE. We are here to create a social environment for all women who are willing to meet new people and create a new life together—a life that you feel secure in as an individual within your own community. We always work together as a club and we operate like we are a family because that is how we feel.

When I started organizing SOLO, I listened to as many women as possible. Using their ideas, I started the club, and I am still always asking the women for feedback.

We have been so busy lately organizing different functions, but we're never so busy that we stop being ourselves. That, my friends, is the almighty fuel of SOLO members. We always have maintained a strong hold on our individuality. To put it bluntly, we are having a great time loving our individuality and loving ourselves.

We've become a close group of friends and because of this, we now have SOLO alumni. Those women who wish to remain in SOLO, after meeting their soul mate—their Goddess—are staying in as our alumni, providing all members know that they are attached. It works for me!

So this is what we busy women have been up to: we hold a Country Jamboree every first Saturday of the month ($6 per ticket, sold in advance. Non-SOLO members also welcome.); we meet for supper before every Womonspace dance; we gather once per weekend, with an agenda of potlucks, movie nights, Sunday chitchats, etc.; we have been invited to many camping trips that will take place this summer; and yes, we are going to the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in August. If you would like to join our trip, please let us know.

Who says being single is lonely? It certainly won't be said by any SOLO member. So if you ever feel that you cannot be, that you will not have, that you cannot find, or that you will not love—look for us. We will be there.

We'd love to have you join in all of our fun. (This was written by one damn happy woman!)

Political Action

Where to Start

Noreen Marshall

For many years the federal Liberal party has promised to amend the *Canadian Human Rights Act* to protect lesbians and gay men from discrimination based on sexual orientation. During the last election, the Liberals again made a very clear promise to us that amending the *Act* would be a priority for a Liberal government.

Many promises have been kept and many bills have been passed since the Liberals were swept to power, but the Minister of Justice, Alan Rock, has recently announced that the bill to provide protection for lesbians and gay men will be postponed yet again, at least until the Fall or until "the political climate is right", whichever comes last.

Letters to politicians do have an impact. If you believe that the *Canadian Human Rights Act* must be changed to allow us to live normal lives free from discrimination and harassment, you can:

1. Fill out the questionnaire many Members of Parliament include in the report they send to your home. Say that protection from discrimination for lesbians and gay men is a priority for you;
2. Phone your MP's constituency office;
3. Write your MP and say:

- you support the inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected ground in the *Canadian Human Rights Act*
- you want to know how the Member intends to vote when this issue comes up in the house of Commons
- you would like the Member to encourage the government to deal with this issue immediately.

It is important that you also encourage your friends and family to write or phone as MP's need to know that not just gays and lesbians support protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation. As we are asking a variety of people to take this action, you will not be outing yourself by writing or phoning.

It is very important to write or phone Reform MPs as they are committed to follow the wishes of their constituents so your voice really does count. If your MP is Liberal, you may wish to remind him or her that the *Red Book* of election promises committed the government to amend the *Human Rights Act* as a priority.

Letters to MPs—c/o House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6—do not need postage stamps.

Editor's note: Noreen is leaving Edmonton and moving to Victoria. Womonspace would like to thank Noreen for her years of work in the area of human rights, and especially for her efforts on behalf of lesbians and gays in Alberta.

Wayward Daughters

Karen

Wayward Daughters—Women sharing their spiritualities and faith (an interfaith ministry of MCC Edmonton).

Wayward Daughters was born out of a need to share reflections, ideas and questions about our journey as women. During the weekend prior to Solstice 1994, a few women gathered at Labrynth Lake Lodge. For most of us, it was a time to renew our strength and spirit. The weather was ideal for skiing, walking, snowshoeing and to reconnect with Mother Earth and her creatures.

Around the table and fireplace, we shared our needs, desires and dreams to be with other women along the faith journey. Our hearts and voices celebrated Solstice by singing women's songs and our drumming echoed our passion deep within us, waiting to be further expressed.

We chose our name and have decided to meet eight times this year, following the lunar calendar and celebrating the life cycle of women: child, maiden, young woman, mother, matriarchy, crone, death, and birth.

Our first official gathering as Wayward Daughters was in February 1995. Although we were few in number, our sharing of different traditions and experiences of the creative child within was very nurturing for all present. We explored experiences of childhood (ours and our children) and favourite stories: Opal Whitely, writing in *Sisters of the Earth;* the child Jesus as written in the Gnostic Gospel; and *One is the Sun.*

Future dates have been set and all women are welcome. Our next celebration is April 30, and will focus on the theme of Maiden. For more information and the location of the meeting, contact Karen: 431-2128.

...Poetry...

L

Even though I am surrounded by people who show me everyday that I am loved, that I am worthy of that love, I am still lonely. I've waited patiently and now I'm searching. In my search I find warm beautiful people. They become my friends. Yet I'm still lonely. I am waiting patiently, I am searching. When our souls connect I will give you all I have; in return you will love me forever. I know this to be true. Even though I don't believe in forever, we are the exception. Even though I don't believe in love, we will love. I call to you each day and night and when the time is right you will come to me and we will be as one FOREVER.

> *"A lot of strange things have been done in the name of love. In the search for love. And for the love of women. Crazy, silly, unreasonable things..."*
>
> *Ann Bannon, Beebo to Beth, in* Journey to a Woman, *1960.*

Alone

But Not Lonely

Ilke

When I left a twenty-year relationship, I was told by concerned family members that I would never make it on my own. Their concern, though inappropriately voiced, was somewhat justified. I was a student in my third year of a psychology degree, living on student loans and being financially supported, for the most part, by my partner. I had a mediocre part-time job, no savings of my own, and few life skills beyond those of the traditional housewife.

But what I did have was a dream. It haunted me throughout an abusive and barren childhood and stayed with me in the darkest hours of an equally abusive partnership. I knew, deep within, that somehow it *was* possible to live in an environment of psychological and physical safety, of independence, community and most important of all, love. In the last two and a half months, that dream has come true for me, thanks largely to the women of the lesbian community and most especially, my family of choice—the women of SOLO.

The other night, my roommate and I were talking about the changes that have taken place in my life. She said to me, "Well it's hard for me to see the changes because I didn't know you before." Yet for me, the changes have been drastic and totally wonderful. I now sleep with the door of my room open. I can hear many of you thinking, so what? Perhaps you will understand when I tell you that last Christmas I was sleeping on a sofa bed in the study of my ex-partner's home, and because there was no lock on the door, I was barricading the door each night with a heavy metal file cabinet plus my wooden desk. It was what I had to do to feel safe enough to sleep.

I now have the independence I have craved for so long. Occasionally I suffer from insomnia. I used to pace the halls of my house, unsure what to do with myself yet knowing that if I tried to leave, I would be stopped.

A few weeks after I moved in with my roommate, I had one of those nights. I tried pacing, I tried a cup of tea, I tried reading and nothing helped. Then I realized that now there was no one to stop me from leaving if I felt I needed to. So in the wee hours of the morning, I got dressed, got into my car and just drove around the city. It was the most freeing thing I could have done and when I returned home later that morning, it was to a smile and an attitude of acceptance without judgment—instead of criticism, anger and abuse.

I am learning what it means to live in a community. If I need to talk, there is always someone to talk to, someone to phone or have coffee with. When I need help with the mothering of my ten-year-old son, there are women who are willing to spend time with him or

with both of us, and other children for him to connect and identify with. And when I attend a dance or other social function, I usually have somewhere between six and ten dates, thanks to my friends in SOLO.

But perhaps most important of all, I am learning a lot about love. In leaving the partnership, and coming out as a lesbian, I left my family of origin. Most of them cannot or will not accept or understand my new found happiness. I miss them, but not as much as I thought I would. Because now I am busily involved in creating a family of choice and these have become mothers and sisters and friends in a way that far surpasses my own original family.

As far as practical matters go, I am still a student and still doing well at my studies. I have a new job with better hours that pays more money than the last one. I have a moderate savings account, but it is all mine. And I am learning to live my own life, which includes learning to look after myself. I still experience little thrills of pride each time I replace the windshield wiper fluid in my car or use my own personal bank card. I can only imagine what it will feel like to experience the fulfillment of another dream this summer when my friends and I travel to Michigan to attend the Womyn's Music Festival. It will be incredible and awesome and ... well, I've already run out of words.

Sometimes the most truth is found in the simplest of sayings and what I have learned so far is that life is definitely what I make it AND that I don't have to do it alone. I am also learning that occasionally being alone is not the same as being lonely and I am certainly learning how to be happy. The other night, as I watched my roommate remove some links from my medic alert bracelet for me—just because I asked her to, just because I didn't know how—I realized how truly grateful and happy I am for my life these days. The underlying thread of fear, depression and hopelessness that I used to live with has been replaced by one of peace, contentment and a brighter hope for the future.

To those of you who may be leaving a relationship, or have recently ended one, I want to tell you that you will make it. You will survive, grow, and learn to be happy again, and you don't necessarily need another partner to do it. The following lyrics have become my theme song in these good and growing times I now live in:

I'm doing alright.
I'm strong enough to make it on my own.
I'm not afraid of the night.
I'm learning how to face it alone.
I've been good at holding on
Now I'm learning to let go.
I always wondered what I'd do without you.
Now I know.[1]

Be happy and at peace. Live in love and gentle compassion for one another. It is what we womyn do best and I believe we all know, deep within, that it is what we deserve.

[1] From "Now I Know", by Lari White, on her CD *Wishes*.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Weekly Events:

GLCCE (Gay and Lesbian Community Centre), 104-11745 Jasper Avenue is open Monday to Friday from 7-10 pm and Wednesday from 1-4 pm. Peer counselling, drop-in, lesbian coming out group and library. Phone 488-3234.

Outreach (formerly GALOC); social & political student group on the University of Alberta campus, meets Mondays, 6-7 pm at Heritage Lounge in Athabasca Hall. 988-4166.

Gaywire A lesbian and gay radio show on FM 88.5. Thursdays from 6-7 pm.

Lesbian and Gay Badminton Thursdays, 7-9 pm at Oliver School, 10210-117 St.; $1.

Northern Titans (bowling for lesbians and gays) Saturdays, 5:15 pm at Lynnwood Bowl, 16127-118 Ave.

Pink Triangle Youth Group meets every Saturday, 7:30-10 pm at GLCCE. For lesbians and gays 16 to 21 years old.

Metropolitan Community Church weekly worship, 10086 MacDonald Drive, Sundays at 7:15 pm.

SOLO (Singles Only Lesbian Organization) Social club for lesbians and bisexual women (over 18) meets every week for a variety of social functions. Call Linda at 447-4776.

Gay & Lesbian Infoline: 988-4018.

Lesbian Life Line: 425-0511.

April Events:

Saturday, April 1

Nature Walk

Join the Liatris Society outdoor & gardening group on a walk through Kinnaird Ravine. Meet at 10936-81 Street, 1:30 pm. Everyone welcome.

Women's Equinox Dance

at Riverdale Hall, 9231-100 Avenue, 8:30 pm-1 am. Smoke-free and alcohol-free. Woman to Womon Books will be there.

SOLO Country Jamboree

First Saturday of every month, advance tickets only; contact SOLO members or call Linda at 447-4776. All women are welcome.

Sunday, April 2

Womonspace News Meeting

Boystown,10116-124 Street, at noon. Deadline for submissions for May issue on the topic "Lesbians & the Law."

Wednesday, April 5

Womonspace Board Meeting

9930-106 Street, 7:30 pm. (Please note that there is no general meeting this month. Womonspace members are welcome to attend our board meeting.)

Friday, April 14

Sacred Circle Dancing

Open to any woman who wants to dance. Riverdale Hall, 9231-100 Ave, 7-9 pm. Donations toward hall rental are gratefully accepted.

Saturday, April 15

Womonspace Dance!

Bonnie Doon Hall, 9240-93 Street, 8 pm-1 am. Admission is $4 for members and $8 for non-members. (If you'd like to get in free by becoming a volunteer, phone Rosa at 455-1573.)

Tuesday, April 18–Friday April 21
Skylight on Vision TV
Series over four nights; "Sacred Tests, Spirituality and Same-sex Unions." 10:30 pm.

Friday, April 28
Sacred Circle Dancing
Celebrate Beltane with dancing open to all women at Riverdale Hall, 7pm sharp. 9231-100 Avenue. No experience necessary.

Saturday, April 29
Alberta Sings Out
Over a hundred gay and lesbian voices raised in song! Edmonton Vocal Minority is joined by choirs from Calgary and Saskatoon, as well as the Edmonton group Unitas, in a combined concert at Convocation Hall, U of A. 8 pm. Advance tickets $10($8) at Orlando Books, The Bagel Tree, Boystown, and The Front Page; $12 at the door.

Sunday, April 30
Crocus Hunt at Redwater Sandhills
Liatris Society trip to observe wildflowers at an ecological preserve northeast of Edmonton. Meet at 10936-81 Street at 9 am. Phone Richard for more details: 454-2480. Bring your friends and a picnic lunch!
Wayward Daughters
Women sharing their spirituality celebrate the theme of Maiden, starting at 7pm. For more information, contact Karen at 431-2128.

Saturday, May 6
SOLO Country Jamboree
Advance tickets only; contact SOLO members or call Linda at 447-4776. All women are welcome.

Sunday, May 7
Womonspace News Meeting
Boystown, 10116-124 Street, at noon. Submissions deadline for the June issue on the topic "Womonspace Dances."

Goodbye Heather
President to Join Aussie Dykes
Heather, our president of Womonspace, has accepted a position in Australia. Her dedication in serving lesbians in the Edmonton area, first as a member of the *Womonspace News* committee, and later as president and dance co-ordinator, has been very much appreciated. Her loyal hours of volunteer work, her organizational skills, and her vision of greater possibilities for Womonspace have kept us vital. Heather's calm strength, intellectual curiosity, and ingenuity will be greatly missed. Good luck, Heather!

PSST!
Wanna Make Some Money?
Womonspace is now accepting applications from non-profit groups interested in co-sponsoring a dance in the 1995-96 season. Application deadline in May 30, 1995.

Four dances are available for co-sponsorship. Co-sponsors earn one third of the evening's profits or a minium of $300. Womonspace provides a dance coordinator and the co-sponsoring group provides a minimun of 15 volunteers.

To apply for dance co-sponsorship, call the Lesbian Life Line (425-0511) and ask for an application form. Mail the completed application form to Womonspace, Basement, 9930-106 Street, Edmonton AB T5K 1C7.

Serving in Silence

A Love Story

Amy Lee Cardufian

"Serving in Silence, the Grethe Cammermeyer Story," is a tale of one woman's battle against an archaic military regulation. Grethe Cammermeyer was the highest-ranking officer ever to be kicked out of the U.S. army for being gay.

But there's much more to the NBC movie than her highly publicized legal fight to stay in the service.

With Barbra Streisand and Glenn Close (who also plays the role of Cammermeyer) as executive producers, "Serving in Silence" begins as the simple story of two women who meet through mutual friends, recognize their attraction for each other and endure the flirting/courtship/dating rituals that inevitably result.

Their relationship faces the ultimate test when Cammermeyer, a woman of conviction and impeccable honesty, acknowledges her sexual orientation during a routine security clearance interview. Cammermeyer's 23 years of superb leadership and outstanding military achievement prove not nearly as significant to the the army as four little words: "I am a lesbian."

Asked to resign her commission, Cammermeyer instead digs in and vows to fight the hypocrisy that allows competent, talented, dedicated military personnel to be discharged on the sole basis of their homosexuality.

Cammermeyer's conviction never wavers as she is forced to come out to her family, friends and colleagues. "I can't lie about who I am. I'd rather lose my uniform than my integrity," she says.

One of the movie's most poignant moments is the tearful scene where an anguished Grethe announces to her four sons that she's suing the army—and why. When one responds with the predictable question, "When did you decide to become a lesbian?" her response is, "I think I always knew."

Grethe also has to re-examine her relationship with her father, a tough, Norwegian doctor whose love and acceptance she has spent a lifetime trying to attain. He admits he refused to hug his three sons while they were growing up because he didn't want them "to become homosexual." His initial distaste for her lifestyle ("I am sorry you had to say anything about this") gradually evolves into a quiet acceptance, to the point where he eventually tells his daughter, "You have a perfectly normal life... Can't they [the army] see that!"

Meanwhile, Cammermeyer's lover, Diane—an intense, liberal-thinking artist with both feet firmly in the closet—would be quite happy to bury her head in the sand until the whole issue blows over. Coming out—to anybody—is definitely not her strong suit.

"Why force somebody to hear something they don't want to hear?" she reasons as Grethe prepares to break the

news to her father. "I'm not going to pretend," Grethe vows. "He doesn't need to know," Diane insists. "I need him to know," Grethe replies.

Diane's hysterical/comical reaction to being outed on national television (during a news feature on Cammermeyer's eventual discharge), followed by the famous kiss scene that stirred up controversy long before the movie aired, serves as a reminder that "Serving In Silence" is far more than one soldier's story. It's a tasteful, telling, remarkably human portrayal of two extraordinary women who mean the world to each other.

As for 'the kiss', Cammermeyer herself proclaimed after watching the tender scene: "If people focus on that kiss, they have essentially missed the entire purpose of the movie...and the entire purpose of people's existence.

Amen.

"As I painfully uncoupled from Susan, I promised myself with great fierceness that I would never be a "couple" again, never again compose a couple history with anyone...

... Never Soniaandanyoneelse ever again. Just Sonia. Period. No more sharing of hip bones or, even worse, of vital organs. I was never again going to be part of a package deal.

Finding the word "single" as strong a relationShip programmer as "couple," I was equally firm in my refusal ever again to think of myself or any other uncoupled woman as "single."

Sonia Johnson, *The Ship That Sailed Into the Living Room: Sex and Intimacy Reconsidered*, 1991

My Eyes Sparkle

Shelley

When her eyes look like fire and fill with tears as we talk about victimized womyn.

When she speaks of her co-workers and the injustice of their work place, which she works tirelessly on correcting.

When she makes time in her hectic day to laugh, cry, listen and offer direct advice to her friends, always leaving them feeling loved and cared for.

When her children sit on her lap and she holds them, gently caressing their backs, while rocking them to a place full of love and calmness.

When she sits around with friends and family, playing her guitar, feeling the music so much she closes her eyes as she moves to the music she creates.

When we dance, I can see and feel her sensual, sexy body moving to the beat of the music.

When we slowly and passionately do our Rain Dance over and over again, then lay in each other's arms completely spent, with both of us knowing that if there is a heaven, we were just there.

So when you look into my eyes, know that the sparkle you see is for Linda and that it is a reflection from the string of lights she put around my heart.

Ruminations

Rosa

I began to ruminate the minute I got into my car. When I arrived at the coffee shop, her car was already there. My heart skipped a beat. I was so irresistibly attracted to her and I could barely contain my excitement at the prospect of seeing her again. I floated in and saw her sitting in a corner of the coffee shop. She saw me and waved.

Both of us were single. We both dated other womyn. I know that, for the most part, I enjoyed my single status but I found this womon attractive on *many* levels and would probably welcome the chance to see her on a more regular basis.

I walked over to where she was sitting. Her gaze on me was unwavering and bold. I liked this womon; she was very sure of herself. I sat down. "Hi, how are you?" We ordered coffee. She was so easy to be with and so much fun. I loved her company and we drank one cup of coffee after another.

Periodically one of us would have to make a quick trip to the bathroom. Eventually, we decided to switch to a table nearer the washroom to cut down on the travelling time. However, after a while, nature was beckoning so often that we finally ended up moving our table right *into* the bathroom so we could decafeinate ourselves without having to leave in mid-sentence. I was beginning to feel a deep bond with this womon.

It was time for the H.O.R.S.E. C.H.I.P.S. Test of Compatability:

Honest? Yes!

Open-minded? Yes!

Reliable and trustworthy? Yes!

Sensitive?? (Or did this 'S' stand for sensual)??

Esteem? (a good self-esteem, that is) Yes!

Communicates well? She wrote the manual (or womonual on 'I' messages).

Humorous? Ha ha, yeah!

Intelligent? Ph.D. material, this one.

Physically active? She must be! What a body!

Spiritual? She's an angel!

Hmmmm! I still wasn't sure that I wanted to give up being single. In the future, I didn't want people asking me the whereabouts of my "better half". I never know if they mean one half of two or if they see human beings as half a person that needs to be in a relationship in order to become whole and to feel complete. The whole idea was totally abhorrent to me. What if I decide that I want to be non-monogamous and I'm dating two or three other womyn? Would people then say, "Where are your better thirds or better quarters?" If there is some deep cavernous hole within us that we expect someone else to fill, few relationships will survive that kind of demand.

I continued to ruminate. Even if I am seeing someone, I don't want to own them nor do I want to be owned to feel secure. I often felt a great deal of reticence about getting involved with someone and part of it was due to having to give up a certain degree of my independence and freedom just to be with someone else. Does it have to be that way?

I suddenly became aware that my mind was kilometers away from the coffee shop. I took another sip of coffee and looked at my date. At this point I really wasn't sure if I wanted to be in a relationship or what *type* of relationship I wanted. Will I have to compromise a lot to be with this person?

The rumunitions continued in my head. With time I know that I would eventually work all this out. I sipped my coffeee and looked deeply in her eyes. I reached out for hand.

"You know, we've been going out for at least a month and I think we really get along quite well. I would really like to be your better whole..."

"A woman who loathes the sight of men and dogs, and hates them both cordially, is Miss Augusta Main, a spinster farmer near Berlin, N.Y. ... Only in harvest time does she seek outside help, and then she hires strapping young women."

"She Dislikes Men and Dogs"
in *The East Hampton Star*,
December 31, 1897

Between the Covers

At Edmonton Public Library

Lindy Pratch

Heather Lewis has written her first novel, and it's caused quite a stir. *House Rules* is a finalist for the seventh annual Lambda Literary Awards which will be announced in June of this year. *The Advocate* called it 1994's "most harrowing book."

It isn't a story for the faint of heart. Fifteen-year-old Lee looks like she's twenty, and she's been abused by her father for as long as she can remember. She escapes to the world of show horse jumping, where she finds a woman lover. Lee also finds herself immersed in a life of intravenous drugs, alcohol, and violent sex. Her challenge is to find a way out.

The story moves quickly and the viewpoint of the young victim remains believable throughout. It is an unflinching exploration of the dark side of human passion.

If you enjoy the writing of authors like Dorothy Allison and Sarah Schulman, you will like this book.

A Fairy Tale...Maybe!

Sheryl McInnes

Once upon a time there was thing called "lesbian literature". You could find lots of it in women's bookstores, some of it in general bookstores, and bits of it even in chain bookstores. Lesbian literature had a whole range of ideas, stories and pictures to inform and entertain all kinds of lesbians.

Oh sure, it was not perfect; we complained about silly plots, too much sex, not enough sex, the wrong kind of sex, too academic, not academic enough, and of course, the ubiquitous —too expensive.

For a while, lesbian literature was so chic that mainstream publishers lined up to get the latest 'outing' biography, dyke mystery, or erotic picture book into print. We didn't notice that the characters in those mainstream books did not represent the diversity of our community, and were in fact mostly stereotypes of the straight view of what a lesbian was, or should be.

We almost forgot that lesbians make up only about 5% of the population at any given moment, that lesbian literature comes from the very margins of a society that is not all that fond of women, never mind women who love other women. We forgot that more than 90% of lesbian literature was published by lesbian and feminist publishers who for the most part kept about one day ahead of the mortgage company and the bill collectors.

We forgot that if people don't buy books, promote books, new titles and old favourites, then soon, no one publishes them either. And sadly, we forget that the ONLY bookstores that we could count on to consistently stock lesbian literature in its full range, were the two dozen or so feminist and lesbian/gay bookstores across Canada.

And so ... when lesbian wasn't chic anymore, when we thought that what mainstream bookstores were willing to sell was all there was to be had, when we stopped spending our preciously few book dollars at feminist/lesbian bookstores, the 85-100 new lesbian literature titles each year slipped to 50, then to 25, and finally disappeared. The lesbian presses all went broke, the lesbian bookstores all closed, lesbian literature was dropped from mainstream publisher's lists, and mainstream bookstores stopped buying any existing backlist titles. All we had left was the pulp fiction in the "dirty" bookstores, words written to excite men.

A fairy tale? Maybe. But are we willing to take that risk?

(Credit for the ideas, if not the words, to Carol Seajay, "The Backlash and the Backlist" in *The Women's Review of Books*, December 1994.)

AS THE CHOIR TURNS ♫ "Single Notes" ♫

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WOMONSPACE DANCE

SATURDAY, APRIL 15
8 PM TO 1 AM
BONNIE DOON HALL
9240–93 STREET

WOMONSPACE 1995 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Basement, 9930 106 Street Edmonton AB T5K 1C7 Phone: 425-0511
Confidentiality Assured

NAME(S)_____
ADDRESS_____ CITY_____
POSTAL CODE_____ PHONE_____

Membership Fee: $15/single; $25/couple (with one newsletter)
Cheque or Money Order payable to Womonspace (low income available)

New Member ☐ Renewal ☐ I would like to be a volunteer Yes ☐ No ☐
Please mail my newsletter to my home ☐
I will pick up the newsletter at dances/events ☐ **Total enclosed $**_____